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ABSTRACT

This study examined the role personality variables play in sibling relationships. It proposed that the characteristics of sibling relationships are influenced by: family constellation variables such as birth order, gender, and age spacing; parent-child relationships including quality of relationship and parent management of siblings; and the cognitive, social, and personality characteristics of the children. The study participants were 56 triads of mothers with two school-age children. The focus was on the role individual characteristics play in sibling relationships, specifically on the dimensions of warmth, conflict, relative power, and competition for parental attention. The dimensions were evaluated via the Five-Factor Model, which contained personality variables of extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience. The study found evidence of links between sibling relationships and temperamental or personality characteristics. It found that personality traits were more often associated with conflict than with warmth and that older children's characteristics were more strongly associated with the distribution of power in the relationship. It also found that of the different personality variables, conscientiousness was most often associated with the relationship dimension, with agreeableness as the second most consistent predictor. (Contains 69 references.) (SD)

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PERSONALITY AND SIBLING RELATIONSHIPS

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Having a sibling can be wonderful, terrible, or even both. Perhaps more than any other type of close relationship, those between siblings vary widely. The affective tone can range from very positive to very negative. Patterns of interaction can be symmetrical when the siblings are close in age, or they can be assymetrical when one is much older than the other.

During the last two decades, investigators have become interested in identifying the bases for such individual differences in sibling relationships. Our own work has been guided by the model depicted in Figure 6.1 (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985). Specifically, we propose that the characteristics of sibling relationships are influenced by: (a) family constellation variables; (b) parent–child relationships; and (c) the cognitive, social, and personality characteristics of the children. Similar models of factors associated with sibling relationships have been posited by other investigators (e.g., Stoneman & Brody, 1993).

The early literature on siblings focused on the role of family constellation variables, such as birth order, sex of sibling, and age spacing in the dyad (see Ernst & Angst, 1983, Sutton-Smith & Rosenberg, 1970). Most of this work was concerned with the links between constellation variables and personality traits, intelligence, or other characteristics of the children. A more limited amount of work directly examined the links between these variables and sibling relationship characteristics (e.g., Bowerman & Dobash, 1974; Furman & Buhrmester, 1985; Koch, 1960; Minnett, Vandell, & Santrock, 1983). Typically, the associations

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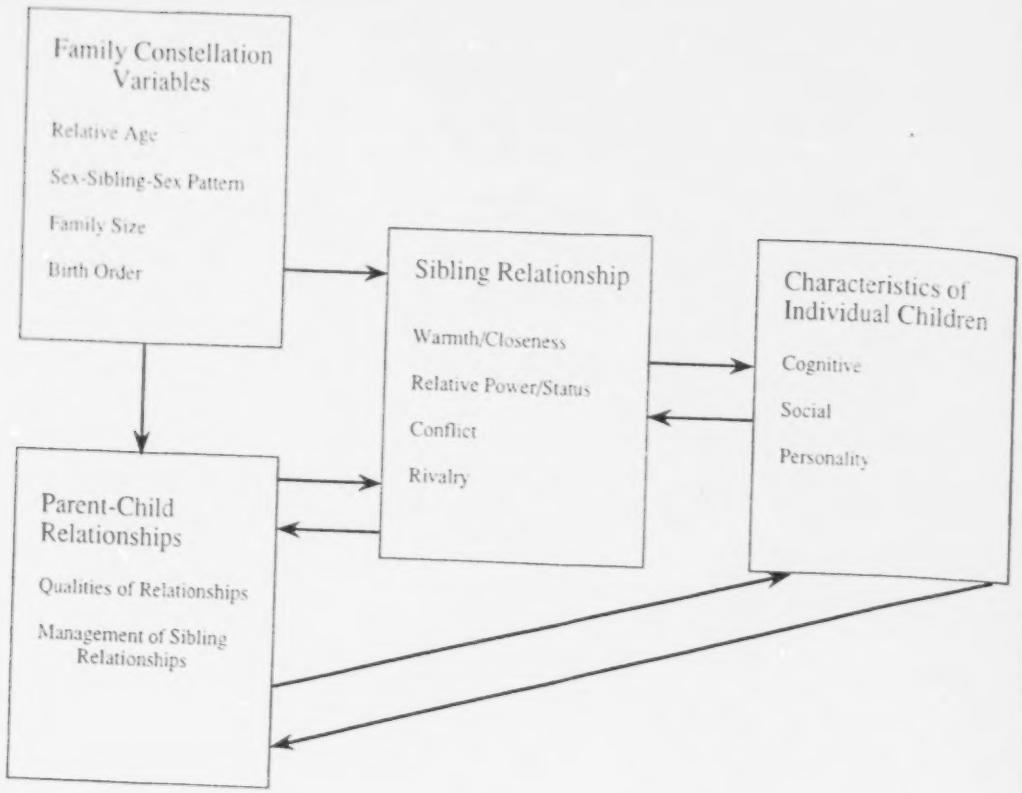

FIGURE 6.1

have not been found to be very strong, except that the distribution of power in the relationship is closely associated with the relative ages of the two children (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985).

More recent work has focused on the links between sibling relationships and other familial relationships (see reviews by Dunn, 1988; Furman, in press; Furman & Giberson, in press). Warmth and positive interactions in parent–child and siblings relationships are associated with one another, as are conflict or punitive interactions in the two relationships (Brody, Stoneman, McCoy, & Forehand, 1992; Bryant & Crockenberg, 1980; Stocker & McHale, 1992; Volling & Belsky, 1992). Furthermore, differences in the two children's relationships with parents are predictive of conflict or jealousy between siblings (Brody, Stoneman, & Burke, 1987a; Brody et al., 1992; Stocker, Dunn, & Plomin, 1989). Finally, the characteristics of the parent's marital relationship are related to the characteristics of the children's sibling relationship (Brody, Stoneman, & Burke, 1987b; Furman & Giberson, in press; MacKinnon, 1989).

Although these studies have clearly documented links among the different family relationships, the associations have typically

been moderate in size. A significant amount of the variance in sibling relationships remains to be explained by other factors.

In this chapter, we discuss the role personality variables may play in sibling relationships. After some prefatory comments about the concept of personality, we review the existing literature that has examined such links. Then we present a description of some recent work in our laboratory. Finally, we discuss some possible directions for subsequent work.

PERSONALITY IN CONTEMPORARY PSYCHOLOGY

Before discussing the links between personality and sibling relationships, a few comments should be made about current conceptualizations of personality. In the late 1960s, the concept of personality traits was seriously criticized (Mischel, 1968). In particular, serious questions were raised about how consistent behavior was across situations and how predictive traits were of behavior. These criticisms generated a flurry of conceptual papers and empirical studies (see e.g., Bem & Allen, 1974; Bowers, 1973; Krahe, 1992; Magnussen & Endler, 1977; Pervin & Lewis, 1978). This work did not result in an abandonment of the concept of personality, but instead brought about a clearer articulation of the nature of traits. In particular, traits are conceptualized as dispositions to behave in particular ways. A disposition does not mean that one will always behave in a particular way, just that one is inclined to or tends to behave in that way. Other personality characteristics or situational factors may preempt particular dispositions in specific instances. Accordingly, a trait may not be very predictive of behavior in a particular situation, but it should be and is predictive of patterns of behavior across a series of appropriate situations (Epstein, 1979).

Advances have also been made in the identification of the primary dimensions of personality. Research on the dimensions of personality began with the work of Allport and Odbert (1936), who examined dictionary entries and selected more than 4,000 terms that they thought represented stable personality traits. Through a variety of subjective and objective methods, Cattell (1943) reduced the list of 4,000 trait descriptors to a more manageable list of 171 terms and subsequently to a list of 35 groupings of traits (Cattell, 1945a). Factor analyses of ratings on these 35 trait variables yielded 12 factors (Cattell, 1945b). Cattell still retained too many factors by today's criteria for factor analyses.

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Some years after Cattell's initial reduction, Fiske's (1949) and Tupes and Christal's (1961) analysis of trait ratings yielded the dimensions that have come to be known as the Five-Factor Model. These five dimensions are extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience. The Five-Factor Model has been shown to be the underlying structure in self-report questionnaires and in lists of adjectives derived by other means; in fact, the five factors even emerge on measures that were thought to have different underlying structures. Finally, studies have found that the structure appears in a wide range of cultures, including Germany, the Netherlands, Japan, China, and the Philippines (see John, 1990, 1991, for reviews; and Block, 1993, for an alternative view).

Although some investigators interested in personality development have begun to examine the Five-Factor Model (see Digman, 1989; Digman & Inouye, 1986; Graziano & Eisenberg, in press; Halverson, Kohnstamm, & Martin, in press), most developmentalists interested in traitlike characteristics have focused on temperamental variables. The nine temperament dimensions derived from Chess and Thomas's classic New York longitudinal study guided this field for many decades (Thomas, Chess, Birch, Hertzig, & Korn, 1963). Recently a number of alternative conceptualizations and measures of temperament have emerged as the field has flourished (see Goldsmith & Rieser-Danner, 1990, for a review). Aside from the work on temperament, the existing literature on personality development primarily consists of investigations of specific traits, such as ego control (Block, 1971), Type A personality (Matthews, 1981) or self-monitoring (Graziano, Leone, Musser, & Lautenschlager, 1987). As yet, a comprehensive framework for conceptualizing personality development has not emerged, although several authors are beginning to speculate about the nature of the links between early temperament and later personality (Hagekull, in press; Rothbart & Ahadi, in press).

LINKING PERSONALITY AND SIBLING RELATIONSHIPS

Intuitively, one would expect that the personality characteristics of individuals would be related to the characteristics of their relationships with their siblings. Surprisingly little empirical research, however, has focused on the links between the two.

As part of a large study of 40 same-sex sibling pairs, Brody and associates (1987a) collected maternal ratings of activity level, emotional intensity, and persistence. Siblings' prosocial behavior, agonistic behavior, and verbalizations were coded while dyads were playing with their mothers and while playing alone. The temperament dimensions were related to the behavior of the siblings playing alone, particularly to agonistic behavior. The activity level and emotional intensity of each child in the dyads were positively correlated with agonistic behavior, whereas the persistence of each child was negatively related. These patterns were particularly consistent for female dyads. Activity level and persistence by the younger sibling in the male dyads were somewhat associated with prosocial behavior and verbalizations, but less consistently. In general, the temperament of the younger sibling was more consistently related to the relationship dimensions than was that of the older sibling. Interestingly, none of the temperamental variables was predictive of sibling interactions when the mother was present, perhaps reflecting the lower rate of interchanges between siblings in that context.

Stocker and associates (1989) also examined the links between temperamental characteristics and sibling relationship qualities. They gathered maternal ratings of Buss and Plomin's (1984) five temperamental dimensions and three other indices of emotionality. Measures of the sibling relationship were derived from naturalistic observations, observations of structured tasks, and maternal interviews. Relatively few associations were found. In part, the limited number of relations may reflect the fact that mothers were present during the structured tasks. On the unstructured task, positive interactions were negatively related to temperamental ratings of the frequency of being emotionally upset, a finding consistent with Brody and associates' (1987a) results.

More recently, Munn and Dunn (1989) examined the relations between temperament and the sibling relationships of preschool-aged children. Mothers completed the Behavioral Style Questionnaire (Fullard, McDevitt, & Carey, 1984), which assesses the nine temperamental dimensions from the Chess and Thomas system (Thomas et al., 1963). Naturalistic observations were gathered of the duration of joint pretend play, joint physical association play, joint nonpretend play, and conflict when the younger child was 24 and 36 months old. Relatively few consistent relations were found. At both time periods, however,

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nonadaptability of the older sibling was negatively related to joint pretend play, whereas distractibility of the older sibling was positively related. Additionally, the negative moods of both children were associated with conflict at 24 months, but not at 36 months. Finally, differences in the two children's approach–withdrawal, nonadaptability, intensity, and negative mood were all associated with conflict at 36 months but not at 24 months.

THE FIVE-FACTOR MODEL AND RELATIONSHIPS

Before discussing the previous studies, we describe the results of a recent project conducted in our laboratory. Like the other investigators, we were interested in the role individual characteristics play in sibling relationships, but we examined the dimensions in the Five-Factor Model, rather than temperamental characteristics.

The participants included 56 triads of mothers and two school-aged children. The average ages of the younger and older children were 9.43 and 11.33 years, respectively; the gender compositions of the dyads were approximately balanced. Most were from suburban Caucasian middle-class families. Each of the participants completed the Children's Personality Questionnaire (CPQ; Porter & Cattell, 1975) and the Sibling Relationship Questionnaire (SRQ; Furman & Buhrmester, 1985). The children completed the questionnaires about their own personality characteristics and their relationships with their siblings, whereas the mothers completed the measures in reference to their children and their children's relationships with each other.

The SRQ is a 53-item self-report instrument that assesses the warmth, conflict, relative power, and competition for parental attention in the sibling dyad. Composite factors were derived by averaging the two children's and mother's reports on the relationship. These composites provided highly reliable estimates of each of the relationship dimensions (M α = .82).

The CPQ is a 140-item self-report measure based on the Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire (16PF; Cattell, Eber, & Tatsuoka, 1970). In order to form five-factor scales, 10 raters sorted each of the items into one of the five dimensions. After all items were sorted, they assigned a rating on a 7-point Likert scale for how prototypical they believed the item was for the

dimension to which they had assigned it. Items were assigned to a scale if they met the following criteria: 80% or greater category agreement among judges, and a mean prototypicality judgment above 4. Based on these criteria, 63 of the 140 items on the CPQ were included in the five-factor scales. Confirmatory factor analyses with a larger sample of children indicated a good fit of the proposed model to the data (Lanthier, 1993b).

Table 6.1 presents the correlations between the sibling relationship qualities and the two children's personality characteristics. Several patterns warrant mentioning.

First, personality traits were more often associated with conflict than with warmth. Six of the ten correlations with conflict were significant, whereas only two of the ten were with warmth. This pattern has emerged relatively consistently in the different studies and is discussed shortly.

TABLE 6.1 CORRELATIONS BETWEEN SIBLING RELATIONSHIP DIMENSIONS AND YOUNGER AND OLDER CHILDREN'S FIVE-FACTOR TRAITS

	Dyad Member		
	Older	Younger	R^2
Warmth			
Extroversion	.10	.19	.05
Agreeableness	.24+	.16	.07
Conscientiousness	.23+	.40**	.21**
Neuroticism	−.13	−.15	.04
Openness to Experience	−.27*	−.18	.09
Conflict			
Extroversion	−.06	−.23+	.07
Agreeableness	−.35**	−.38**	.23**
Conscientiousness	−.46	−.43**	.36**
Neuroticism	.27*	.15	.08
Openness to Experience	.27*	.50**	.27**
Relative Power			
Extroversion	−.38**	−.07	.16*
Agreeableness	−.36**	−.29*	.17*
Conscientiousness	−.47**	−.01	.21*
Neuroticism	.56**	.08	.31**
Openness to Experience	.19	.11	.05
Competition for Parental Attention			
Extroversion	−.04	−.14	.03
Agreeableness	−.10	−.24+	.08
Conscientiousness	−.05	−.37**	.17*
Neuroticism	.27*	.18	.12+
Openness to Experience	−.15	.16	.11

+$p < .10$. *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

Second, the older child's characteristics were more strongly associated with the distribution of power in the relationship than were those of the younger child. Because older siblings almost always have more power in the relationship (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985; Vandell, Minnett, & Santrock, 1987), their personality characteristics may have more influence in determining the degree to which this power is wielded.

Third, of the different personality variables, conscientiousness was most often associated with the relationship dimensions. Not surprisingly, it was positively associated with warmth and negatively associated with conflict, relative power, and parental competition. The second most consistent predictor was agreeableness, which was negatively related to both conflict and differences in power in the relationship. In some related work we examined the links between five-factor traits and other close relationships. In one study, agreeableness and conscientiousness were found to be the most consistent predictors of perceived warmth in best friendships (Lanthier & Furman, 1992a). In another study, parents' and children's levels of agreeableness and conscientiousness were consistently related to different indices of perceived warmth in parent–child relationships (Lanthier, 1993a). Thus, the pattern of personality correlates appears to be relatively consistent across different types of relationships. In other research, we found that conscientiousness and agreeableness were related to social skills, which may account for the associations with relationship qualities (Lanthier, 1993b).

Finally, we examined the ways that children's personality characteristics might mesh or interact to predict the relationship dimensions. That is, not only may the children's personality traits per se be predictive, but also their characteristics relative to one another. Munn and Dunn's (1989) finding that differences in temperament were associated with conflict could be evidence of such, although their findings could also reflect the impact of having at least one child with a difficult temperament. In any case, ample evidence exists in the adult social-psychological literature for the effects of similarity on interpersonal attraction and mate selection (Berscheid & Walster, 1978; Hinde, 1979; Murstein, 1976).

To examine the potential role of the meshing of characteristics, we conducted a series of regression analyses using three predictors of sibling relationship characteristics: (a) the older child's score on a particular trait, (b) the younger child's score

on the same trait, and (c) the multiplicative interaction of the two children's scores. In effect, the last predictor assesses the degree of similarity or difference in the other two's characteristics. The effects of the younger and older child's characteristics were essentially identical to those found in the correlational analyses reported earlier. Interestingly, none of the interaction terms were found to be significant.

Several possibilities may account for the absence of findings regarding meshing of the two children's personality traits. Matching of characteristics may not be terribly important in these relationships. In fact, most of the existing work on the effects of similarity have either looked at the selection of partners or friends or the early stages of relationship development. Sibling relationships are both nonvoluntary and have a long history by the time the children are in school. Moreover, the children may seek out somewhat different niches, which may make differences in personality characteristics more normative. After all, the existing literature has found that siblings are no more alike than unrelated children once shared genetic factors have been taken into account (Plomin & Daniels, 1987; Rowe & Plomin, 1981). Because siblings certainly share more common experiences than do two strangers, we believe that other factors might be fostering differences that counteract any effect these common experiences may have.

On the other hand, as part of the same study, we found that similarity in the experience of stress was associated with more positive perceptions of the sibling relationship (Lanthier & Furman, 1992b). When both had experienced a high amount of stress (or a low amount), the relationship was described as relatively warm and low in conflict. The reverse pattern was found when one had experienced a lot of stress and the other had not. Thus, some types of similarity may be predictive, but perhaps not similarity of personality characteristics per se.

A more sophisticated model of the ways that children's personality traits are associated with sibling relationship characteristics may also be needed. Goodness of fit models, such as those proposed in the temperament literature, go beyond the similarity models that have appeared in the social psychological literature (Chess & Thomas, 1991). Goodness of fit occurs when the person's temperament is adequate to master the demands of his or her environment. Poorness of fit occurs when the person's temperament is inadequate to handle the environmental demands. Perhaps a goodness of fit model would better

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explain how personality traits relate to sibling relationship quality. In this instance, it may be that children's expectations for their sibling's personality traits are the important mediators in these domains, rather than the children's absolute score or the similarity of the two scores. For example, some children may find it important for their siblings to be extroverted. When these children are faced with an introverted sibling, poorness of personality-environment fit would occur, and we may expect less warmth and greater conflict in the relationships. For other children, however, having an introverted sibling may not pose particular difficulties, and the fit between the two of them may still be satisfactory.

In summary, the present study and past studies provide evidence of links between sibling relationships and temperamental or personality characteristics. The precise nature of these links, however, is not evident as the findings vary substantially from study to study. Interpreting such differences is difficult because the studies vary in subject population, variables assessed, and methodology.

One consistently found pattern, however, is that personality and temperamental characteristics are more related to conflict in the relationship than they are to warmth. Several explanations seem possible. First, it may be more difficult to assess positive features of a relationship than negative ones. For example, the amount of self-disclosure among older pairs of siblings may be a reasonable index of warmth in the relationship, but it is difficult to structure a situation that inherently pulls for such interchanges. For better or worse, investigators have had less problems finding situations that elicit conflict between siblings.

To assess positive features, one would want to find a situation in which there is marked variation in siblings' behavior and such variation is reflective of the nature of their relationship. Unfortunately, when two siblings are presented with most structured observational tasks, they are required to interact together as there is little else to do. Thus, these tasks may mask differences in their proclivities to do so. The alternative of collecting naturalistic observations also presents difficulties because the frequency of interacting together during a particular naturalistic observation may be influenced by many factors other than their proclivities to interact with one another. Short observational samples are very prone to random noise or error; thus, they are not likely to provide very accurate estimates of the actual pattern of interactions (see Waters, 1978). Most investiga-

tors have not had the resources to observe enough times to ensure that they have a reliable index of the pattern of sibling interactions.

Positive features of a relationship may also not be as apparent in interactions as conflict is. For example, how exactly are feelings of admiration or affection manifested behaviorally? Elsewhere we have found less agreement among parents and siblings about the positive features of the sibling relationship than about negative ones (Furman, Jones, Buhrmester, & Adler, 1988).

The results of several studies also suggest that children's temperamental characteristics may play a significant role when they are interacting alone, but not when others are present (e.g., Brody et al., 1987a). Certainly, the characteristics of the parent would also be likely to play a role in shaping the interactions of the triad, but it is not clear why the parent's presence would eliminate (vs. weaken) the role of the children's characteristics. Perhaps children's "true personalities" come out more when alone than with parents.

Alternatively, the problem may be in these particular observational settings, rather than in all settings in which a third person is present. For example, Brody and associates (1987a) noted that few interactions occurred between siblings when their mother was present, a pattern that would make it difficult to assess the characteristics of the sibling relationship. In our own observational work, we have been more successful using a series of triadic tasks than simply observing the sibling dyads alone (Furman, 1992). When they were alone, the children had little else to do except play with their siblings. The triadic tasks also seemed different from those used in other studies. In particular, the children were asked to discuss the things they liked and disliked about their relationship with each other while their mothers were present. Needless to say, this task elicited a significant amount of interaction between the siblings. Perhaps, then, the conclusion that we should draw is that all observations of sibling relationships, even naturalistic ones, are not necessarily useful or even valid indices of the sibling relationship. Investigators using self-report or interview measures typically provide validational evidence for their measures, but observational researchers have often relied on the face validity of their observations. Unfortunately, seeing is not always believing (see Furman, 1992, and Furman et al., 1988, for further discussion).

Finally, and most substantively, the positive features of the relationship may be less influenced by the characteristics of the

individuals and more influenced by the history of the relationship. In other words, regardless of the nature of one's personality, one does not necessarily feel close to everyone. Feelings of affection or closeness are likely to be influenced by one's experiences or interactions with that person.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Clearly, the literature on personality and sibling relationships is at a very rudimentary stage, yet we believe that the topic has promise. In fact, such work has considerable implications for both personality researchers and relationship researchers. To date, research on the characteristics of individuals and on the characteristics of relationships have developed relatively separately. How the two interface presents some interesting, if thorny, problems. The difficulties arise from the fact that the level of analysis of individuals and that of relationships are fundamentally distinct. One cannot reduce relationships to the characteristics of individuals, nor can one derive the characteristics of individuals solely from their relationships.

How then can the two levels be linked? Elsewhere (Furman, 1984) we proposed six sets of variables that affect patterns of interactions or relationships (see Table 6.2). In this chapter we focused on the first three classes—the characteristics of the individual, the characteristics of the partner, and the interaction characteristics of the two individuals. The fourth category, relationship-specific characteristics, complicates the issues.

Relationship-specific characteristics refer to the history of the relationship, specific attitudes and feelings toward each other, and expectations for the future itself. Because factors such as past history are expected to be major determinants of relationships, relationships cannot be reduced to the characteristics of individuals. The inclusion of situational factors and interactions among the different factors makes such a reduction even less likely.

Unfortunately, relatively little work has examined the role of relationship history or expectations in shaping the subsequent course of a relationship. In part, this omission reflects the fact that relatively few longitudinal studies have been conducted on sibling relationships, or, that relationship researchers have not developed conceptual frameworks or measurement techniques

Table 6.2 Major Classes of Variables Affecting Patterns of Interaction

1. Characteristics of the Individual—skill components, personality, and cognitive characteristics of the person
2. Characteristics of the Partner—skill components, personality, and cognitive characteristics of the other
3. Interaction of the Characteristics of the Two Individuals—product of the first two terms
4. Relationship-Specific Characteristics—history of the relationship, specific attitudes and feelings toward each other, expectancies for the future of the relationship
5. Situational Characteristics—environmental variables that affect social interactions
6. Interactions among Preceding Classes—characteristics of individual by relationship-specific characteristics, characteristics of individual by situational variables, characteristic of partner by relationship-specific characteristics, characteristic of partner by situational variables, relationship-specific characteristics by situational variables, interactions of the characteristics of the two by relationship-specific characteristics, interactions of the two by situational variables, characteristics of the individual by relationship-specific characteristics by situational variables, characteristics of the partner by relationship-specific characteristics by situational variables, interactions of the two by relationship-specific characteristics by situational characteristics.

for examining such variables. An important topic for subsequent research would be to examine such factors and the relative contributions of history and individual characteristics. Given the enduring nature of sibling relationships, history may be particularly important. After all, we probably all remember those incidents when our siblings were particularly nasty or particularly kind.

Studies of the role of personality traits should also provide a better understanding of the inner workings of sibling relationships or other close relationships. During the past decade, considerable progress has been made in developing conceptual frameworks and measures for assessing the characteristics of sibling relationships. Self-report and parental report measures have been developed (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985), and observational schemes exist for coding patterns of interactions in both structured and naturalistic settings (e.g., Brody et al. 1987a; Furman, 1992; Stocker et al., 1989; Vandell et al., 1987). These instruments, however, are measures of relationship or interactional characteristics. An important next step will be to identify the contributions each sibling makes to the relationship

or interaction. Measures of children's traits or social behaviors should contribute substantially to that enterprise. Kenny and La Voie's (1984) Social Relations Model may also prove valuable. Using a round robin procedure, each person in a small group, such as a family, is observed interacting with every other person. One can then estimate actor effects (such as traits), partner effects (the extent to which one's behavior is elicited by a particular partner), and relationship effects. One can also estimate the degree to which behaviors are reciprocated. Although the estimates are likely to depend on the dyads that one chooses to observe, such procedures may help us understand the contributions individuals make to their relationships.

Studies of sibling and other close relationships also have some important implications for research on personality traits. To date, most of the work on personality traits and social behavior has examined interactions with strangers or acquaintances, rather than with close others. How might personality traits be manifested in close relationships? On the one hand, one might expect that traits may be more predictive of behavior because the interactions may be less guided by normative rules of interaction, thus more reflective of who the people are (Athay & Darley, 1981). On the other hand, the history of the relationship may be greater, thus reducing the relative influence of the two's traits.

In any event, the manifestations of a trait may be different in the context of a close relationship than in other interpersonal situations. As yet, relatively little consideration has been given to how trait manifestations may be different in close relationships or in particular types of close relationships, such as those with siblings. Perhaps some traits are expressed more commonly in certain relationships. For example, potentially conflictual situations seem to arise more often in sibling relationships than in other relationships (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985); accordingly, one may get a better picture of children's characteristic styles of managing conflict by observing sibling relationships than by observing other relationships in which conflicts are less common.

The preceding considerations give rise to the question of whether people behave consistently in different relationships. The results of the studies described here suggest that there is some moderate level of consistency across relationships. That is, general measures of the five-factor traits or temperament were predictive of the characteristics of sibling relationships. Yet, one can ask if a greater level of consistency or predictive

power would be found within specific types of relationships. For example, is there more consistency in one's behavior with two different siblings than there is in behavior between a sibling and a friend? As yet, little relevant evidence exists, although we have found evidence that individuals' views or perceptions of relationships are relatively specific to types of relationships (Furman & Wehner, in press). That is, views of friendships, romantic relationships, and parent–child relationships are only moderately related to one another. If perceptions of relationships are specific to type of relationship, then one might behave somewhat differently in different types of relationships. Such a finding, however, would not necessarily vitiate the significance of traits. Even classical trait theorists did not expect that traits would be predictive of behavior in all situations; instead, they were expected to be predictive in situations in which there was some potential press for such tendencies. For example, some children may generally be dominant in their interactions with others, but the asymmetrical nature of parent–child relationships (and perhaps those with older siblings) may limit the degree to which such a dominant disposition has the opportunity to be expressed. Similarly, even if a child is open or frank, it does not mean he or she will be self-disclosing with every one he or she meets. Certainly, behavior is somewhat dependent on the situation or context, but we have not yet considered how the type or nature of the relationship may be an important contextual determinant. We believe that we will be able to describe better the role of personality in relationships by giving more consideration to relational context.

The study of sibling relationships in particular is intriguing for several reasons. One of the dominant themes in the recent literature has been the idea that siblings experience different environments (Plomin & Daniels, 1987; Rowe & Plomin, 1981). That is, after genetic factors have been accounted for, siblings are on average no more similar to one another than unrelated children. In part, differences may emerge because of differential experiences outside of the family, but differences may also emerge because of differences in relationships with family members. Yet, most traits have a significant genetic component (Loehlin, 1992); thus, one would expect that these factors may contribute to some similarity in experience as well as the similarity in genetic background. That is, each of the children would have the experience of having a sibling with certain personality characteristics. It seems, then, that some factors must

counterbalance this tendency to have a sibling with certain characteristics, because siblings have not been found to be more similar to one another than they are to other children (except for genetic factors). A particularly intriguing possibility is the idea that the manifestation of a trait or its construal by the other may vary within the sibling relationship. For example, extroversion in an older sibling may be construed differently than in a younger one. In general, the contribution of structural characteristics of sibling relationships to the expression of traits warrants further consideration.

Clearly, many intriguing questions remain to be answered. The literature on personality traits and other individual characteristics and that on close relationships, particularly sibling relationships, are not well integrated yet, but the study of their interface promises to yield valuable insights for both fields.

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